



YALINETWORK

ESTABLISHING PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

Presenter: Allison Silberberg, Vice Mayor, Alexandria, Virginia

Public Management

Video Transcript

[TEXT: Young African Leaders Initiative
Online Training Series]

TEXT: Establishing Professional Ethics]

[TEXT: Allison Silberberg, Vice Mayor, Alexandria, Virginia]

I'm Allison Silberberg, and I'm the vice mayor of Alexandria, Virginia, an historic city founded in 1749, located near Washington, D.C. In this lesson, I am going to discuss establishing professional ethics.

It is a great honor to be elected and to serve. And I never take it for granted. I realize that citizens voted for me because they knew I would serve the public and the common good.

Ethics have everything to do with public service. It all begins and ends with the public trust, which is a cornerstone of democracy. The rule of law applies to all of us equally. That means that whether we are a janitor, a teacher, a police officer, an entrepreneur or even the President of the United States, the rule of law trumps everything. No one is above the law, not even the President! This creates trust so that together, we can build a great and good society.

One critical aspect of public service is transparency. That means that all monies that are paid to you or that you pay out and all contributions or expenses that you incur related to your campaigning or your political work must be reported. This also extends to any situation in which an individual or company gives you a contribution and then asks a favor with regard to a piece of legislation or land issue.

To me, any topic before the City Council, which is where I serve, must stand on its own. It does not matter to me if a supporter is connected to the issue. The question in my mind is always, "What is in the best interest of our historic community?" And that question is what I base my decision upon. It's not about friendship or familial ties. It's about making the best possible decision for our city. It would not be fair to the city nor to our residents to make decisions based upon friendships or relationships in general.

Again, transparency is a critical part of democracy. If you wonder if something is appropriate, then pause and find out. There is an old rule. If you do something you're not proud of, and would not want it to be on the front page of the newspaper, or on the television or on the radio, then do not do it! It's an easy rule. If it doesn't feel right, it probably isn't.

To be an effective public servant, it is critical to have empathy and passion and a steadfast commitment to social justice. It's important for me to speak from the heart, to fight for justice, to stand up for the most vulnerable, to be present and bear witness, to do all I can for the generations to come.



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It is an honor to serve, and maintaining sterling professional ethics enables me to help others. But all of us need to uphold those standards in order to do the right thing and maintain the public trust. This is imperative to establishing professional ethics.

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[TEXT: Test your knowledge
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